

W. Mackhouse
TWO DISCOURSES,

Preached at WINKFIELD

On the Day of the GENERAL FAST,

APPOINTED BY

HIS MAJESTY'S PROCLAMATION,

On WEDNESDAY 7th of March, 1798.

By **EDWARD SPENCER**, Rector of Winkfield. *K*



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THE following are plain parochial Discourses. They are committed to the Press, with the hope that they may in some small degree contribute, by the divine blessing, at this alarming crisis, to awaken the attention of those into whose hands they may fall, to a due consideration of their religious and political interests and duties.

S E R M O N I.

O our God, wilt thou not judge them? For we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee. 2 CHRON. XX. 12.

THE dispensations of divine Providence often appear intricate and perplexed to weak and short-sighted mortals: but there is, no doubt, a regular chain and consistency preserved by the infinite wisdom of God in the administration of them. In some instances God affords such intimations as may lead to a discovery of his great designs, and teach us by analogy to rest satisfied of the wisdom of those which we are not at present able fully to comprehend. To teach us the more effectually to fear his judgments, to admire his wisdom and over-ruling providence, and to trust his goodness, it has pleased God that the various events which befel his Church and People of old should be faithfully recorded, and we may derive from them such instruction as our own circumstances require.

In this view the events which befel the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, suggest certain principles upon which we may reason with respect to ourselves, and collect information, reproof, or admonition, according to our own condition, and the events which pass around us. The narrative, of which the text is a part, will, I trust, be found to suggest matter of suitable meditation for the present occasion.

To prepare the way for such remarks as apply more particularly to ourselves, it may be expedient to take a brief review of the state of the kingdom of Judah, at the time more immediately referred to.

The kingdom of Judah appears, at that season, to have enjoyed an unusual measure of prosperity. Jehoshaphat may be justly reckoned as one of the most upright of its sovereigns. "The Lord was with him because he walked in the first ways of his father David, and sought not unto Baalim^a." He maintained the worship of Jehovah, and made due provision for the religious instruction of his people^b. It was not then imagined, because some Kings had wickedly abused their authority, for the maintenance of idolatry; that therefore the true Religion was to be left to shift for itself, without the countenance and support of the supreme Government. That notion was reserved for the madness and impiety of the present age. The kingdom was prosperous: Jehoshaphat had cities of store, and much business in the cities of Judah^c. He was secure against the attacks of enemies from abroad^d; and at home justice was administered with strict integrity: "Take heed (said Jehoshaphat to the Judges), what ye do; for ye judge not for man, but for the Lord: for there is no iniquity with the Lord our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts^e." But all this fair form of piety, of prosperity, and of justice, was in danger of being suddenly destroyed. The children of Moab, and the children of Ammon, with others besides, came against Jehoshaphat to battle: they advanced towards his kingdom, and the information of their designs spread a general alarm: "Jehosha-

^a Chap. xvii. 3. ^b Ver. 8, 9. ^c Chap. xvii. 12, 13.

^d Ver. 10. ^e Chap. xix. 6, 7.

“ phat feared, and set himself to seek the Lord, and
 “ proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah.” Nor
 were the people disobedient to the royal proclama-
 tion: for “ Judah gathered themselves together, to
 “ ask help of the Lord: even out of all the cities of
 “ Judah they came to seek the Lord.” The prayer
 of Jehoshaphat, on this occasion, as you have heard^f
 already, expresses a deep reverence of the divine
 Majesty, as the supreme Ruler over all the king-
 doms of the world; as the God who had wrought
 salvation for Israel in times past, and established his
 worship amongst them; as the God who had encour-
 aged them to seek unto him in their affliction, and
 who had promised to hear and help them. Being
 threatened therefore with an unjust and unprovoked
 attack, from a numerous and cruel enemy, who
 was come up to invade their country, and to cast
 them out of the possession which God had given
 them to inherit; Jehoshaphat commits his cause into
 the hands of God, and implores his protection:—
 “ O our God wilt thou not judge them? For we
 “ have no might against this great company which
 “ cometh against us; neither know we what to do:
 “ but our eyes are unto thee.”—God heard his
 prayer, and encouraged him by his prophet: “ Be
 “ not afraid, nor dismayed by reason of this great
 “ multitude; for the battle is not yours but God’s.”
 And God wrought deliverance for his people in a
 wonderful manner, and made their enemies the in-
 struments of their own destruction.

The particulars which call for our more especial
 attention are,

I. The situation of Judah, threatened with an
 invasion by a numerous and hostile power.

^f It was the Lesson appointed for the Morning Service.

II. The inability confessed by Jehoshaphat to defend his people, without the divine assistance.

III. His committing himself and his cause to God, as the supreme Governor of the world, and as the God of his people.

IV. The encouragement given him under those circumstances, that God would take the cause upon himself, and protect his people from the threatened destruction.

I. The situation of Judah, threatened with an invasion by a numerous and hostile foe.

That *we* have been blessed with every prosperous circumstance which distinguished the kingdom of Judah in the days of Jehoshaphat, is too notorious to be denied. Not to enlarge upon the private and personal virtues of the King whom God has hitherto been pleased graciously to support in the throne of these kingdoms: *we* have been favoured with the legal establishment and free possession of Christ's true religion. Oh, that *we* were generally sensible of this privilege! We have been distinguished by an extension of trade and commerce, beyond the example of former ages. We have enjoyed peace and security at home, under the just and equal administration of the laws, which, without distinction, have spoken the same language to all orders and degrees of men amongst us.

But of these privileges *we* have, alas, been too insensible! and, like forward children, have despised the blessings afforded us. It has therefore pleased God to alarm us with the apprehension of the loss of them. When many flattered themselves that the cords of amity and peace would be drawn more close than ever between this kingdom and a neighbouring nation, *we* have seen a power rise up
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amongst its inhabitants, which, after subverting the monarchy and persecuting the Christian Faith in their own country, has spread terror and desolation in all nations around them. The efforts made to oppose its progress on the continent, though such as were sanctioned by sound policy and just defence, have proved ineffectual; and the French Republic, (however variable, and in a course of perpetual revolution at home,) seems to have been appointed as a scourge in the hand of God to punish the inhabitants of Europe.

We have yet been beyond the reach of those acts of oppression and cruelty which their tyranny has exercised, wherever either their arms or their councils have prevailed. *They* envy our prosperity and security, and they threaten to direct all the force of their arms against us to destroy us. As the Moabites and Ammonites threatened to invade Judah, and made preparations for that purpose; so have *they* formed their design, and made their preparations to invade this happy country. Nor let any foolishly contemplate an invasion with indifference. *We* have been blessed with so long a continuance of peace and security at home, that we have no idea of the miseries and desolation which attend the progress of a conquering enemy, or the retreat of a defeated one. God grant we may never experience them! Upon so direful an event, let not any imagine that to persons in *their* situation the effects would be of small consequence. The poor, as well as those who are more wealthy, would be involved in the calamity: the sources of industry and employment would immediately be cut off and fail. And besides, the slaughter and desolation which would mark the progress of a conquering foe; when the rapaciousness of
A 4. their

their avarice could no longer be gratified, the fury of military execution, attended with every act of brutality and cruelty, would cause those to be esteemed the more happy who were the earliest victims to the sword.

My design in thus faithfully stating such scenes of wretchedness, is not to discourage or weaken the spirit of any man, but rather to awaken those who view our situation with unconcern; that from a regard for their own interest, if no better motive will prevail with them, they may be ready by every means in their power,—by contributing according to their substance, be it more or less,—and even by personal service, if necessary, to support the government, and assist in the defence of their country against such outrage and desolation; and, above all, to excite them to make the Lord of hosts their refuge, and with Jehoshaphat to commit their cause into his hands. For, we observed,

II. The inability confessed by Jehoshaphat to defend his people without the divine assistance.—
 “We have no might against this great company that cometh against us, but our eyes are unto thee.”

The conviction and the confession of the servants of God has in all ages been to the same effect. They knew that without the divine assistance, the best concerted measures of defence would prove abortive. At the same time they did not neglect to make such preparations for defence as their circumstances required. And the conviction of their own inability arose from the consideration, 1. That the secret purposes of God’s providence cannot be withstood: and 2. That, as sinners, they had forfeited that security the loss of which they apprehended. And surely both these considerations apply strongly to ourselves.

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1. As to the secret purposes of God's providence, with them in our practical conduct we have no concern: but still it behoves us to bow with reverence before him, under the conviction that there is no counsel nor might able to oppose them. It has been often manifest, that by instruments the most unlikely, very important revolutions have been accomplished in the state of human affairs; and the agents whom God has employed for the punishment of a sinful people, have generally been others as sinful, who have had nothing in view but the gratification of their own ambition or cruelty. We see this remarkably illustrated in the case both of Israel and Judah; the former of which fell by the power of the Assyrians, the latter by that of the Chaldeans. The purposes of God, however, to punish his own people for their sins, did not justify the conduct of their oppressors. *They* had other objects in view, and, like our enemies, despised the God of Israel, and blasphemed him. We find, therefore, when God's purpose was answered in the punishment of his people, he remembered the oppression of their adversaries. "For Israel was not forsaken nor Judah
 " of his God, of the Lord of hosts, though their
 " land was filled with sin against the Holy One of
 " Israel." On the contrary, we read, "The violence
 " done to me and to my flesh be upon Babylon,
 " shall the inhabitants of Zion say; and my blood
 " upon the inhabitants of Chaldea, shall Jerusalem
 " say. Therefore thus saith the Lord, Behold I
 " will plead thy cause, and take vengeance for thee.
 " And Babylon shall become heaps, a dwelling-place
 " for dragons, an astonishment, and an hissing, with-
 " out an inhabitant." Which prediction has been remarkably accomplished.

But as all this discovers that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong; and that God determines the fate of kingdoms according to his infinite wisdom and justice; so it teaches us, that we are to judge of the actions of men, and of the conduct of nations, solely according to their moral nature. It has in our day been the custom with some to palliate and excuse the ferocious and cruel outrages of our neighbours, because they suppose some time or other a more glorious state of things is to arise out of the chaos of anarchy and confusion. It will be well if they be not mistaken. Rather it is to be feared, that God is pouring forth his judgments upon a guilty world. But be the event what it may, no principle can be more fallacious, as a criterion of human actions, than that which justifies the means from the consideration of the final issue. God may over-rule the actions of free agents in what manner he pleases; but we are not to justify the murderer because the man whom he way-laid and assassinated was a villain.

And, as the over-ruling power and providence of God cannot be opposed, so neither are we able to defend ourselves independent of the divine assistance; because, as sinners, we have forfeited that security the loss of which we have reason to fear.

It is not to be denied that God has a right to punish sinners, either in their individual or their collective capacity. Our appearance here on this day is an acknowledgment that we know we are sinners in both these respects. Would to God the conviction sank deep into the heart of every one, and produced that repentance which is not to be repented of.

The prevailing sins of the nation, the pride, and luxury, and dissipation, which, in the scenes of public

lic life, are too predominant, it will answer very little purpose to expatiate upon in this place. We are more concerned to repent of our own sins, to consider our own ways, and to turn our feet unto God's testimonies.

And here, my friends, you must permit me to deal plainly with you.—As to your private vices (if those vices can be called private which are committed publicly in the face of the sun,) these are such as God has declared he will not pass over unpunished. May we not take up the language of the Prophet and say, “Because of swearing the land mourneth?” God hath denounced a “woe to the *drunkards* of Ephraim;” and the same *woe* will overtake the drunkards of all other places. In this respect it is the same with the master and his servant, with the maid and her mistress; except that a double *woe* will overtake those who, being placed in authority, encourage rather than restrain riot and excess amongst their dependents. Must I mention also the lewdness which seems to increase amongst us: hear what the word of God saith concerning *that*, as well as some other vices which prevail too generally. “This ye know that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.” Add to these, the increasing neglect of the public worship of almighty God. How many are there, in this parish, who are very rarely seen in this place? How many who grow more and more slack in their attendance? Whatever the last generation were in some other respects, they certainly held themselves bound, by

a regular attendance on the public worship of God, to acknowledge their dependence on his power and providence. From youth to old age, under infirmities of body, in the severity of winter, they were constant and regular in their attendance: while those who succeed them appear scarcely to retain God in their remembrance, unless it be to blaspheme him. How very few even of those who are better disposed attend at the table of our Lord; and yet Christ, when he instituted his last Supper, said, "Do this in remembrance of me;" and he had before declared, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you."

Whatever be the case with others, these are sins chargeable upon too many of *us*. Add to this, we have all of us been too insensible of the blessings we enjoy, and have in various particulars contributed to the general guilt, for which we have reason to fear God's judgments. A criminal, convicted of his crime, and under the sentence of the law, is in a state of civil incapacity: and God has a right to consider us in the same condition, and to deal with us accordingly. In that case it would prove that "we have no might against this great company that cometh against us;" and then, by the just judgment of God, we must be given over to destruction.

In this case, what is the duty to which we are more particularly called? Certainly to repent, and turn from the evil of our ways, that so iniquity may not be our ruin. The same vices, for the most part, which we have mentioned, particularly a prevailing contempt of God and religion, filled up the measure of the iniquity of France, and brought upon its inhabitants the miseries under which they have so long suffered. Let us be wise by their example, and,
before

before it be too late, turn unto God with sincerity; that, with humble confidence, we may put ourselves under his protection.

When we endeavour to impress you with a sense of the importance of the public worship of God, and of the ministry of his holy word, there are some who foolishly imagine we mean something for ourselves. Alas! my friends, what personal advantage can I derive from your attendance in this place? Except it be, that if my ministry be the means of your conversion and salvation, you will be my joy and crown of rejoicing in the day of the Lord Jesus; but if you neglect and despise it, to you it will become a favour of death unto death eternal. A painful consideration indeed to me, but a much more alarming one to yourselves!

By the mercies of God in Christ Jesus, therefore, let me intreat you to lay these things seriously to heart. Let the threatenings of our enemies be the happy means of awakening your consciences to fear the judgments of God, and let that fear be the beginning of the effectual conversion both of your hearts and of your lives. If you love your country, if you regard the security of your persons, of your property, of all who are dear to you—if you would escape the judgments of God here, and eternal destruction hereafter, henceforward lead a new life; and to this end beseech God to create in you a new heart, and to put a right spirit within you. So shall we be encouraged, though of ourselves we have no might, to put ourselves under the protection of that God who ruleth over all, with humble confidence that as the battle is his, he will maintain our cause, and fight for us against our enemies.

S E R M O N II.

O my God, wilt thou not judge them ? For we have no might against this great company that cometh against us ; neither know we what to do : but our eyes are upon thee. 2 CHRON. XX. 12.

SIN has separated between God and man. It has deprived the sinner of all claim to the divine favour and protection, and it has exposed him to punishment from such instruments, as God may think fit to appoint, for inflicting punishment upon him. The criminal, who has been convicted of his offence, is liable to suffer by the hand of the executioner. This observation is applicable to nations as well as to individuals. And when the judgments of God are abroad in the earth, and seem directed against any particular people, *they* are more especially admonished, both of their demerit, and their danger :—that as a sinful people they deserve punishment ;—and, that as they are threatened with punishment, they have reason to fear it. Hence, in every season of public alarm, the servants of God have in all ages deprecated the displeasure, and implored the aid and protection of Almighty God. Jehoshaphat acted in this manner. He was threatened with an invasion by a numerous and hostile force. He called his people to solemn fasting and humiliation. He confessed his own weakness, and commended his cause into God's hands.

We have seen, that besides the impossibility of
resist-

resisting the divine counsels, when he has devoted a sinful people to destruction; sin is also an express forfeiture of that security which, in time past, a guilty nation may have enjoyed: and therefore, that under the apprehension of God's judgments, we are more particularly required to humble ourselves before him,—to confess and forsake our sins,—to turn from the error of our ways, that iniquity may not be our ruin. Our only hope of safety must arise from the confession, that we are unable to resist the judgments of God, in whatever way he may think fit to inflict them upon us; and we shall then be prepared to imitate the conduct of Jehoshaphat, and to derive comfort from the encouragement given him: For we are to observe

III. That Jehoshaphat committed himself and his cause to God, as the supreme Governor of the world, and as the God of his people. And

IV. The encouragement given him; That God would take the cause upon himself, and protect his people from the threatened destruction.

III. In seasons of prosperity men are apt to forget the supreme power and government of God, and that, as the Psalmist expresses it, “he hath prepared his throne in heaven and his kingdom ruleth over all.” And those who know not God, and have cast off his fear, imagine they act independent of his power and providence. But it behoves us to know “that he ruleth over all the kingdoms of the heathen: and that in his hand is power and might, so that none is able to withstand him.” Even the nations, which despise his name, are subject to his controul. And he that stilleth the noise of the waves and the madness of the people, even when the waves of the sea are mighty and rage horribly, will make it manifest

felt that the Lord who dwelleth on high is mightier. In this view Jehoshaphat considered the matter. He knew that God could controul the most powerful and hostile nations. His eyes therefore were upon the Lord, and he waited upon him with fasting and prayer to obtain his assistance.

Nor must we imagine that God has given up the government of the world; though we see a nation extending its dominion by oppressing other nations around it. God can stop their progress when he pleases, and make apparent the madness and wickedness of their ambitious counsels. Perhaps he has permitted them to prevail hitherto, that many nations may see and feel the dreadful effects of those impious and abandoned principles upon which they have acted—principles, which have prevailed too much in other nations, which now smart under their tyranny—principles, which prevail too much amongst ourselves: and as they tend to the subversion of all order and subordination in civil society, so are they the occasion of that increasing impiety and neglect of religion, which is so characteristic of the times. And let me tell you, my friends, that the indifference with which many view these evils is amongst the worst symptoms of our condition. When many are so lost to the fear of God, the love of their country, and a sense of their own interest in its welfare, that they will scarcely contribute to its defence; when they consider the event of the present contest, and actually speak of it as a matter of indifference; there is reason to fear, lest God should open their eyes by the dreadful experience of the miseries which they affect to despise. But under such circumstances, those who fear God are more particularly called upon by faith and prayer to put themselves under the
divine

divine protection. And such may be the more encouraged to do so, from the other plea advanced by Jehoshaphat, "Art thou not our God." For he had appointed them their inheritance, and fixed his sanctuary amongst his people.

God is in a more particular manner said to be the God of a people, whom he has signalized by the protection of his providence,—to whom he makes known his covenant,—and amongst whom he establishes his pure worship and service. Thus he dealt with the Jews of old. The Lord's portion was his people. He saved them from their enemies. He committed unto them his lively oracles, and did not permit them to sink into the darkness and ignorance of the heathen nations around them. And surely we have in like manner been distinguished by the goodness of God towards *us*. As to temporal deliverances, perhaps there is no nation of Europe which has experienced more wonderful instances of the merciful interposition of divine Providence. When about two centuries ago the power of Spain threatened to subjugate all Europe, and was particularly directed against this kingdom; with a small and inconsiderable force on our part, God was pleased to blast their designs: though their preparations were such as have never since been equalled unless perhaps by those of our enemy at present prepared against us. When we had almost destroyed ourselves, God mercifully restored to us the security of our constitution and government both in Church and State. When we were in danger of falling a sacrifice to Popish tyranny and arbitrary power, God again wrought deliverance for us. And when, within the memory of many yet living, a hostile force had advanced even into the heart of
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the kingdom for the subversion of the government, they were suddenly driven back and defeated. Now the past experience of God's mercy has always been an encouragement to God's people to commit themselves to the continuance of his care and protection.

But how wonderfully have we been distinguished by our religious privileges! The profession of the Christian faith pure and unadulterated has been established in this nation. The publick worship of God has long been performed by the use of a Liturgy correspondent to the principles and usage of the best ages of the church. The word of God has been faithfully preached. The Holy Scriptures have been open to every one who would read them. So that whatever ignorance, or wickedness, or profaneness has prevailed; it is the crime of those who love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. But when we consider how many there are of that unhappy description, we have reason to fear the judgments of God for our base ingratitude and neglect of those privileges, which are intended for our salvation. God has not however left himself without witness in our day. He has amongst us a people who know and love and serve him: and however repeated the efforts of wicked men, he has not yet suffered us to be deprived of the free profession of our holy faith.

The consideration, that God had fixed his sanctuary amongst his people of old, was used by them as a plea to encourage their confidence in Jehovah, and alleged by God himself as a reason why he would not permit their enemies to rule over them. As a father, though he will chastise his child, will not hastily disinherit and abandon him; so God is long-suffering, more especially to those whom he has taken

ken into covenant with himself, and admitted to the privileges of the Church of Christ. By the great goodness of God we have been admitted to those privileges. We are therefore in some sense God's peculiar property, and should for that reason commit our cause to his management and defence. He usually makes those, in whose behalf he purposes to interpose, sensible that their own arm cannot save them; to the end that they may be constrained to make him their refuge, and ascribe to him the honour of their deliverance. And this leads us to consider

IV. The encouragement given Jehoshaphat, that God would take the cause upon himself, and defend his people from the threatened destruction.

The encouragement given Jehoshaphat was by the spirit of prophecy, which came upon Jahaziel in the midst of the congregation. "Thus saith the Lord
 "unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason
 "of this great multitude; for the battle is not your's
 "but God's." ^a When the Jews adhered to the worship of Jehovah the only living and true God, most of the contests in which they were engaged were with men who blasphemed the Lord and despised his authority. This was the case when the army of the King of Assyria came against Jerusalem in the days of Hezekiah. The servants of the King of Assyria, in the name of their master, bid defiance to the Holy One of Israel; and assured themselves of victory as they had prevailed over other nations. "Who
 "among the Gods," say they, "have delivered their
 "country out of my hand, that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand." But what saith the answer of God by the prophet, "Whom hast

^a Ver. 15.

"thou

“thou reproached and blasphemed? Behold,” saith God, “I will put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest.”^b And the case with respect to Jehoshaphat seems to be nearly similar. The nations who came against him were idolatrous nations: God therefore was pleased to assert his own providence as the supreme governor of the world, and to defend his own cause. And such was the event that “the fear of God was on all the kingdoms of those countries, when they heard that the Lord fought against the enemies of Israel.”^c

The danger with which we are threatened is from a people, who have poured contempt upon Christianity, and blasphemed the name of God and his government over the world. How far God may suffer them to prevail we are not able to determine: but surely we may hope that God will maintain his own cause. If we continue stedfast in his covenant and hold fast the profession of the faith of Christ, we may derive encouragement from considering how God hath delivered his people of old. He can, by the secret working of his providence, render abortive the most formidable designs of our enemies. It is therefore our duty to strengthen ourselves in the Lord our God; and trusting in his mercy hope for his protection in the hour of danger. Our greatest danger arises from our partaking with our enemies in their crimes, and despising the mercies of God towards us. In that case, as there will be neither humiliation before God for our sins, nor prayer for his protection, there can be no reason to expect he will vouchsafe to protect us.

But remember, the encouragement, which God

^b 2 Kings xix. 28.

^c 2 Chron. xx. 29.

gives those who love and serve him to commit their cause into his hands, and to hope for his protection, does not supercede their obligation so to act, as may be conducive to their defence. Neither in spiritual nor temporal things have we any warrant for such supine negligence and indifference. In the present case, the infatuation of some persons, who talk as if danger could never reach *them*, is unaccountable. What !—Do they imagine that a conquering enemy would spare *their* houses any more than those of their neighbours ! Be assured, if such a disposition generally prevailed amongst us, we must become an easy prey to the enemy, and should repent our folly, when it became too late to apply a remedy.

In such a case trade and commerce would be at an end, and there would be no one to employ the weaver or the manufacturer. The landed property would be seized by the conqueror. The stock of the farmer would be put in requisition, or delivered over to plunder. The fields would be laid waste, and the occupier deprived of the ability to cultivate them. The consequence would be, that the servant and the labourer being without employment, it would become impossible for them to earn a subsistence. And the relief now afforded the poor, by the provision made for them in their several parishes, would be at an end: for as no man would be able to pay the rates now levied for their support, so the care and collection of them would be abolished. This is no exaggeration of the case. Such misery has taken place where the enemy has prevailed; and I state the case thus plainly that every one whether poor or rich, whether master or servant, may see that his *all*, be it more or less, is at stake; and therefore be excited to do every thing in his power
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for the defence and protection of his country. Committing the common cause unto God, and encouraging ourselves in his fear, we should remember the language of Joab when the Ammonites and Syrians came against Israel, "Be of good courage, and play the men for our people, and for the cities of our God: and the Lord do that which seemeth him good."^d

There can be no doubt that war is one of the most dreadful scourges which God inflicts upon a guilty world: and therefore, it should never be provoked nor engaged in, but for just and necessary defence. This is the case with us at present: and therefore with humble confidence we may be encouraged more earnestly to implore the divine protection. But, amidst the din of war and the desolation of nations, let us learn the uncertainty of every thing in this world, upon which the natural man fixes his hope, and from whence he expects happiness. Alas! my friends, to what uncertainty are all earthly possessions liable! Of what moment then is it, that you have a right to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away, reserved for your enjoyment in a better state! The various calamities of this life are intended to awaken sinful men to a serious consideration of the things of eternity: but if they fail of this effect, the sinner must at last perish in the general ruin, when the earth and the works thereof shall be burnt up.

Let me then remind you, that besides the enemies which threaten your country, you have enemies which threaten the ruin of your souls. Your own sinful affections, the snares and allurements of the world, and the malice of the devil, if you resist them

^d 2 Sam. x. 12.

not will prove your destruction. By your baptism you are bound to acquit yourselves as good soldiers of Christ against sin, the world, and the devil, and to continue Christ's faithful soldiers and servants unto your lives end. Many of you I fear have deserted Christ's service, and are engaged on the side of his enemies and your own. But it is time to return to that Lord from whom you have so deeply revolted. It is true in this sense you may adopt the language of Jehoshaphat, "We have no might against this great company which cometh against us." But if you really feel your weakness and confess it, not as an excuse for your negligence, but with an earnest desire of resisting your spiritual enemies by the help of divine grace, God has promised "that unto *him* that hath no might he will increase strength."

In this spiritual combat your eyes must be upon the Lord. You must run the race which is set before you, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of your faith. He will then take your cause into his own hands, and make it manifest that the battle is not yours but God's. You must however continue fighting the good fight of faith until you lay hold on eternal life.

If you be faithfully engaged in this spiritual warfare, the Captain of your salvation, who was himself made perfect by sufferings, will support you under the evils of this life. In times of public danger or distress, you will make him your refuge. You will possess your souls in peace and patience, and learn to be anxiously careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving to let your request be made known unto God.

And may God hear and answer the prayers which

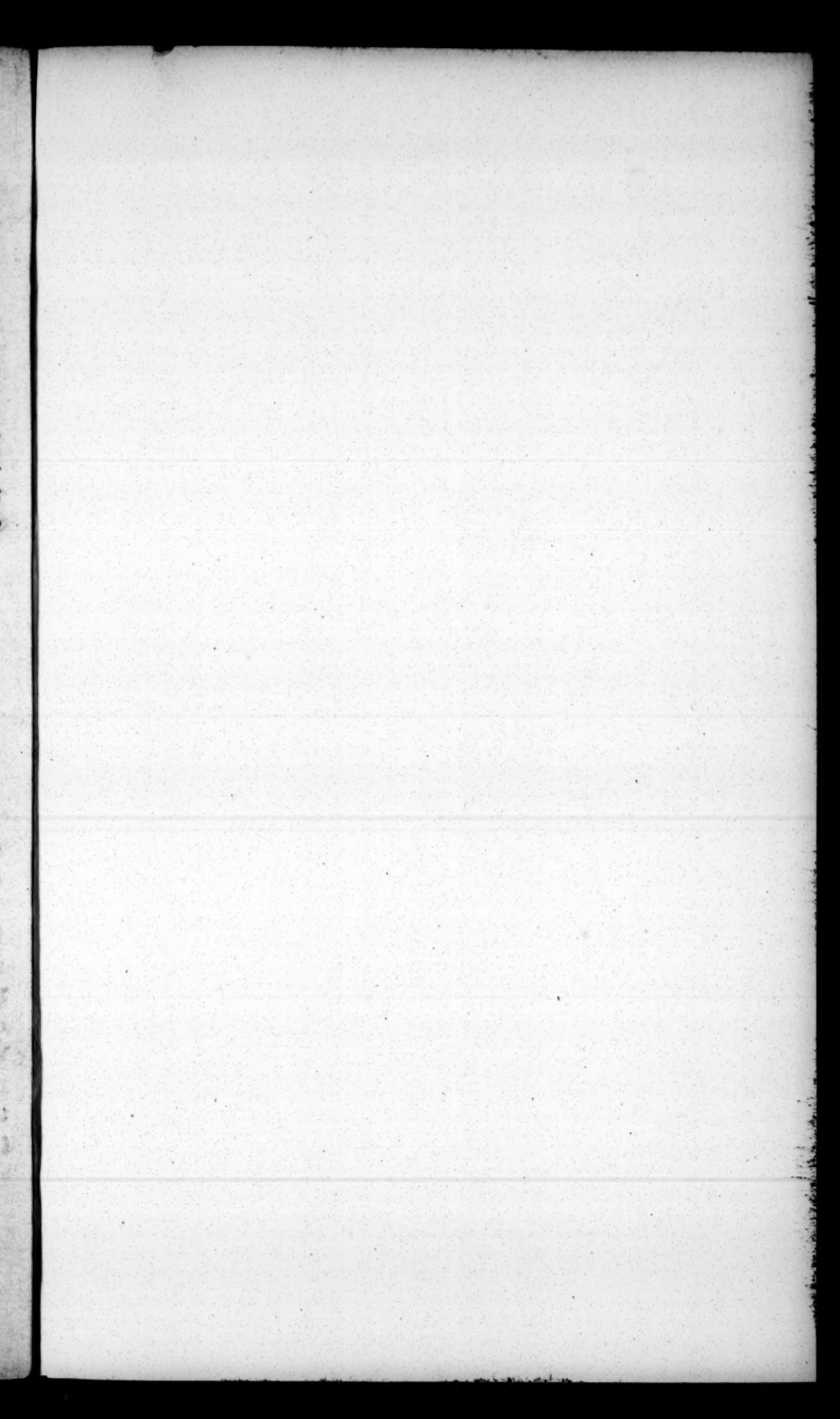
^c Isai. xl. 29.

have

have been put up to him this day. May our humiliation be acceptable in his fight. May he defeat the designs of our enemies, that the sword pass not through the land. May we continue to enjoy peace and security at home, and go out and in none making us afraid. And above all, and as the means to secure every inferior blessing, as well as prepare us for future bliss when destruction shall overtake all the workers of iniquity; may every one here present turn unto the Lord our God with sincerity, and being reconciled to him in Christ Jesus, walk in the path of holiness and peace, and at last enter into eternal rest.

F I N I S.

30 DE 68



have been put up to him this day. May our humiliation be acceptable in his sight. May he defeat the designs of our enemies, that the sword pass not through the land. May we continue to enjoy peace and security at home, and go out and in none making us afraid. And above all, and as the means to secure every inferior blessing, as well as prepare us for future bliss when destruction shall overtake all the workers of iniquity; may every one here present turn unto the Lord our God with sincerity, and being reconciled to him in Christ Jesus, walk in the path of holiness and peace, and at last enter into eternal rest.

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